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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
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SUBJECT: UN/AU UPDATE ON DARFUR PEACE PROCESS IN LEAD-UP TO
NEW YORK

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Summary

¶1. (SBU) One week before the September 21 meeting on Darfur in New York, the UN/AU provided an update on the peace process for representatives in Khartoum. With the exception of a proposed meeting of Darfur rebel leaders in N'djamena from September 16-17, the UN/AU provided few details on its plan for preparing the parties for negotiations at the end of October. However, the UN/AU presented a broad agenda for the talks encompassing power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security and asked the "non-regional" governments of the Tripoli Format to select four representatives to participate in the negotiations. While several key rebel leaders, including Abdulwahid al Nur, Khalil Ibrahim, and Ahmed Abdulshafie may not attend the talks, the potential of reaching an inclusive agreement--in the brief timeframe laid out by the UN/AU and heartily supported by the Sudanese Government--is questionable. The U.S. should present clear positions on the following issues during the September 21 UN/AU-sponsored meeting in New York: a single UN/AU negotiator, issue-based "shuttle diplomacy" prior to the start of negotiations, UN/AU-facilitated dialogue among the factions of the SLM, realistic outcomes for the Libya talks, and an agile contact group with leverage on all of the parties. End summary.

Preparation (or Lack Thereof)

¶2. (SBU) The UN/AU held a briefing for the Khartoum representatives of the "Tripoli Format" governments on September 14 to provide an update on the Darfur peace process in the lead-up to the September 21 meeting on Darfur in New York. Sam Ibok, co-chair of the Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST), said that the UN/AU planned to convene a September 16 preparatory meeting for the Darfur rebels in N'djamena with the "leading personalities" from the late-July Arusha conference. Without providing specifics, Ibok said that the meeting would focus on bringing the rebel movements together, with minimal UN/AU intervention. Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction leader Abdulwahid al Nur had declared he would not attend. Others, such as Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) leader Khalil Ibrahim were also ambivalent.

¶3. (SBU) Beginning around October 17, Ibok said that the UN/AU planned to hold a series of workshops for the rebel movements in Libya to prepare a "rebel platform" for the negotiations. The Chairman of the Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC), Abdul Mohammed, recalled that the most progress during the Abuja talks had occurred just after successful workshops with the rebel movements.

¶4. (SBU) Poloff asked whether, given the continued disunity within the rebel movements, the UN/AU was able to conduct "shuttle diplomacy" between the parties, as envisioned in the UN/AU roadmap. Ibok responded that the "shuttle continues;" UN/AU representatives spoke to rebel leaders daily to determine the most productive "models" for representation at the talks and were seeking meetings with the Sudanese Government to discuss the current fighting and to review the draft agenda for the Libya talks.

Not So Hidden Agenda

¶5. (SBU) Ibok previewed a broad draft "agenda" for the talks. Though UN Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim had approved the agenda, Ibok emphasized that it was still preliminary and had not been shared with the parties. While the agenda was divided into four categories (wealth-sharing, power-sharing, security, and implementation modalities), Ibok stressed that the UN/AU had not decided on a sequence for discussing each category and that Eliasson and Salim were considering whether the components could be negotiated concurrently. However, he outlined the specific issues that the UN/AU planned to discuss and asked for feed-back from the Tripoli Format governments before or during the September 21 UN/AU-sponsored meeting in New York. The agenda will include discussion of the following:

-- Wealth-sharing: compensation; reconstruction and

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development, including a discussion on the resumption of the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (DJAM) and a donor conference; and humanitarian issues, including the return of IDPs and refugees, humanitarian assistance, and land issues/howakir.

-- Security: a new cessation of hostilities, which the UN/AU hoped would precede the October 27 talks; a comprehensive cease-fire agreement; a definition for the UN-African Union Mission in Sudan's (UNAMID) support of the political process; the disarmament of the Janjaweed, and formal security arrangements relating to demobilization and re-integration of all of the armed groups.

-- Power-sharing: one region for Darfur rather than three states and a review of the current power-sharing arrangements at both the federal and regional level.

-- Implementation modalities: international guarantees and the formal status of the new agreement, i.e. as an "annex" to the DPA, a stand-alone agreement, or another mechanism.

¶6. (SBU) The French Ambassador, Christine Robichon, asserted that it would be difficult to have constructive negotiations without a cessation of hostilities to use as a basis for a sustainable cease-fire mechanism. Ibok agreed, saying "if what is happening on the ground now (i.e. the ongoing Government-rebel violence in South Darfur) continues, we cannot have negotiations." Ibok characterized a cessation of hostilities as a "light political statement" to test the sincerity of the parties' commitment to the peace process. The existing mechanisms of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), plus the UN Heavy Support Package, would monitor adherence to the agreement, he posited.

Quick Talks, But Who Will Attend?

¶7. (SBU) Ibok said that Eliasson and Salim--under pressure from the international community--wanted to conclude the negotiations by the end of the year but called this expectation an "optimistic projection." Several outstanding issues on participation remained the principal obstacle to the process, according to Ibok. In addition to recalcitrant Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Abdulwahid al Nur, other key rebel leaders, including the Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) Khalil Ibrahim and SLM faction leader Ahmed Abdulshafie have indicated they will not attend the Libya talks.

¶8. (SBU) The Egyptian Ambassador cautioned that criteria for participation in the peace process should not be limited to armed groups. "They can't be negotiating through the barrel of a gun...there cannot just be a place (at the negotiating table) for those whose only constituency is weapons," he said. Ibok responded that the UN/AU were developing a strategy to include civil society groups in the process, which would be essential for its success.

Hospitality As Leverage

¶9. (SBU) Ibok stressed that addressing the intransigence of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Abdulwahid al Nur "should not be left only to the UN/AU" and that it was incumbent on other governments, particularly in Europe, to ensure his participation in the peace process. "If there is no Abdulwahid, we can pack our bags," he said. The UN/AU was not requesting that Abdulwahid be expelled from Europe, according to Ibok, only that European governments "use the leverage of hospitality to bring together all of the parties."

¶10. (SBU) Robichon called Ibok's comments--a clear allusion to Paris--"severe." "My authorities are working very hard with Abdulwahid," she said, adding that France had persuaded Abdulwahid to receive a UN/AU team in early summer. Ibok apologized for "giving the impression that he was talking about France," noting that Abdulwahid was not the only rebel leader who had taken refuge abroad and was obstructing the peace process. "He's just the biggest fish," explained Ibok, who then reiterated that "there must be conditions attached to hospitality." Robichon said that France had not granted

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"political refugee" status to Abdulwahid, meaning that his visa expired every three months. "We are using all of our leverage within the rule of law," she said. In a separate meeting on September 17, Robichon told the Charge that France was coordinating its Abdulwahid strategy with UN Envoy Eliasson.

SPLM: No Luck with Abdulwahid

¶11. (SBU) During the briefing, Ibok received word that a delegation of the Sudan People's liberation Movement (SPLM), led by Government of Southern Sudan Vice President Riek Machar, had been unsuccessful after three days of meetings in Paris to convince Abdulwahid to attend an SPLM-sponsored meeting for the SLM in Southern Sudan. Noting that the UN/AU still considered the SPLM's role in the Darfur peace process "important," Ibok said that any effort to re-unify the SLM that did not include Abdulwahid was "useless."

Contact Group Controversy

¶12. (SBU) UN/AU plans for international participation at the

Libya talks provoked a strong response from many of the European nations. According to Ibok, the UN/AU would include the four "regional" members of the Tripoli Format (Chad, Libya, Eritrea, and Egypt) and four non-regional members. The UN/AU made it the responsibility of the non-regional members of the Tripoli Format to select their representatives in preparation for the September 21 meeting in New York. He suggested, however, that one slot each could represent North America, Europe, Asia, and the Arab world. During the Abuja talks, negotiations had occurred between the parties and the international community, rather than among the parties. In the new process, both the regional and non-regional representatives would thus operate within a defined framework under the leadership of the UN and AU envoys, said Ibok.

¶13. (SBU) The UK called the four-country limit "unrealistic," emphasizing that the UN/AU would need the "maximum leverage and positive influence" of a broad range of Western participants to bring the parties to compromise. Dutch representatives expressed similar concerns, while calling for the appointment of a chief negotiator. Poloff iterated USG support for a single chief negotiator to shepherd the process. (Note: European representatives in Khartoum concede that the U.S., China, and the EU must be represented on the "contact group." A UN official told Poloff following the meeting that Eliasson had begrudgingly accepted four non-regional members, instead of two, and would never consent to increasing the number. End note.)

Comment

¶14. (SBU) UN and AU officials, including Ibok, admit that there is no concrete strategy to prepare the parties for negotiations prior to October 27, with two exceptions: 1) the vaguely defined--and possibly little attended--meeting in N'djamena, and 2) the workshops in Libya to build a rebel platform, an impossible task given the ongoing disunity within the Darfur movements. The UN/AU have interpreted "shuttle diplomacy" to mean any UN/AU discussions with the Darfur rebel groups and the Sudanese Government, rather than an effort to focus on narrowing the parties' positions on key issues before the start of talks. This misinterpretation is most evident by the menagerie of issues included in the UN/AU draft agenda and the absence of a decision on whether the outcome of the Libya talks will be an addendum to the DPA or a new agreement. To address some of the shortcomings in the UN/AU process, the U.S. should present clear positions on the following issues during the September 21 UN/AU-sponsored meeting in New York: a single UN/AU negotiator, issue-based "shuttle diplomacy" prior to the start of negotiations, UN/AU-facilitated dialogue among the factions of the SLM, realistic outcomes for the Libya talks, and an agile contact group with leverage on all of the parties. End comment.

¶15. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ